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The Promise of Life.

Nature again begins her wonderful cycle of change and transformation. Already our gardens and fields show the results, and from now onwards there will be progressive movement manifested in the world about us. Spring is already assembling her powers for the old but ever new pageant, and the observing eye of grateful man will witness and gladly do homage. First the snowdrops, the harbingers of Spring, quickly followed by the crocuses and the daffodils and later visitors. The full culmination will come speedily, so far as the Spring flowers are concerned, with the decking of our banks and braes with the bluebell and the primrose.

Nowhere, is such consummation more delightful than in our own North of Ireland. We, who write these lines, have been privileged to see the Spring revelation of beauty in other lands, yet still consider that our own need fear no comparison. Who could imagine anything more tender and beautiful than our green banks thickly carpetted with primroses! The wetness of our climate, sometimes the subject of many jeremiads, is nevertheless the chief cause of the freshness and enduring appeal of Nature's display. Our emerald grass and charming hedgerows have certainly little chance of being parched up from want of moisture.

Yet it is not the particular aspects of the season that occur to us now, but the general and underlying truth and the thoughts to which it gives rise at this season of the year. As Professor Henry Drummond reminded us, there is a natural law in the spiritual world and of that law we need to be as Christians especially mindful. Did not our Lord and Master make in its interests one of His most characteristic utterances—"I am come that men might have life and have it more abundantly?" And just as in the natural world Easter time will mark the fulfilment of Nature's present promise of awakening life, so too in the spiritual world we rise to the perception of a perfection of power which the fact of Christ's resurrection made real to devout minds. No criticisms of the New Testament resurrection has affected, or can affect, the serene hope which He created in the hearts of his disciples. Death closes no door to human life and its brightest hopes, rather does it fling open the portals to incipient life and afford it greater opportunity and riper manifestation. This earthly life of ours, rightly understood, is but the opening up of fuller possibilities, of wider visions, of more transcendant aims. All the promise of nobler life will see fulfilment.

Notes of the Month.

The meeting of representatives of our churches in Belfast and District held last month to devise means to stimulate our cause resulted in an interesting discussion and the suggestion of certain practical proposals. These latter are to be considered and, if approved, acted upon by the churches concerned. They are deserving of consideration also by our congregations generally, and for this reason we have pleasure in bringing them forward here. The first was prompted by the plan already adopted by the Holywood Congregation and recorded in our last issue of the Magazine. The members of the Holywood Committee, desirous of encouraging better attendances at the services, had pledged themselves to attend twice a Sunday for three months, except when unavoidable reasons of absence arose. The result has proved satisfactory and stimulating. Hence at the meeting it was suggested that some similar pledge might be adopted elsewhere. Secondly, it was proposed that a full attendance Sunday might be possible, i.e., a day when every church member should make a point of attending his or her church. A third proposal was that as our churches did not give sufficient prominence to social questions like gambling, temperance, and the like, attempts should be made to give them immediate consideration. The old criticism that we do not extend to visitors a warm welcome was forthcoming, and out of it grew the further proposal that each church concerned should appoint persons to undertake that important duty. One proposal concerned the First Church, Belfast, viz., that if the building in Rosemary Street were opened to the public at some stated time during the week, many persons would be prompted to inspect its historic memorials. The detailing of these proposals will make it plain that the meeting was concerned with practical things and really desirous of doing something for the good of our Belfast churches.

* *

With a view of celebrating the Jubilee of the Ulster Unitarian Christian Association, the Annual Service and Meeting will this year take on a special character. The Rev. W. G. Tarrant, B.A., the editor of "The Inquirer," will be the special preacher and speaker, the services and meeting falling at the first week-end in May. In addition to the above events it is proposed to have a dinner. We merely give at this stage a preliminary notice, but hope later to be in a position to amplify it. As usually the Association holds its Annual gatherings early in April, we are desirous of making it known that May is the month selected for their special occasion and its celebrations.

* *

We would again remind the local treasurers of the Orphan Society that all annual subscriptions should be in the hands of the Hon. Treasurer, Mr. W. M'Robert, The Ulster Bank, Waring Street, Belfast, before the end of March, and that the lists of subscribers should be forwarded to the Secretary, the Rev. A. Turner, The Manse, Templepatrick.

* *

We have received particulars of the Oxford Summer School of Theology, which is to be held at Oxford from August 16th to 26th. Under the general heading of "Aspects of Contemporary Theology" about four lectures will be delivered by outstanding men representatives of several nationalities. The fee for the course of lectures is £1. Later a detailed programme of the lecturers and their subjects will be issued. All who are interested may obtain full particulars from the Rev. Dr. J. Estlen Carpenter, 11 Morston Ferry Road, Oxford.

N.B.—All Communications should reach the Editor, Ardeevin, Cadogan Park, Belfast, not later than the 16th of the month preceding publication.

Temperance Notes.

The following are taken from pamphlet issued by the N.U.T.A.

Opinions of Well Known Men.

LORD CHESTERFIELD—

"Alcohol is a palatable poison."

LORD BRAMPTON—

"The root of almost all crimes is the hideous tyranny of drink."

LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL—

"If the money spent on drink could be turned into other trades, all the other industries of the land would flourish."

ADMIRAL LORD CHAS. BERESFORD (at age 60)—

"Since I have entirely given up wine, spirits and beer, I find I can do as much work as when I was 30, and always feel fit, and in good condition."

RICHARD COBDEN—

"Every day experience convinces me more and more that abstinence is the foundation of every social and political improvement. The truest friends of the labouring millions are these who work in this cause."

RT. HON. D. LLOYD GEORGE—

"Alcoholic drinks caused us more damage in the war than all the German submarines."

PROF. T. G. MESARYK (President of Czecho-Slovakia)—

"It is the duty of every thoughtful person to act sincerely for the regeneration of the people. The cost of alcoholism to human life is much superior to that of war, and the victims do not disappear. They continue miserably their unhealthy life, and bequeath their unhealthiness to the next generation."

SUZANNE LENGLEN (World Tennis Champion)—

"My food is quite normal. I drink neither wine nor any kind of alcoholic beverage."

From the Domestic Mission Belfast.

Last month was inaugurated at our Mission in Belfast an interesting experiment. Each Sunday afternoon, subjects previously announced and posted up on the notice board, the young men take it in turn to introduce a debate on an important subject. Our attention was attracted when we learnt a subject had been announced under the heading "Religion and Drink." Very free and frank are the discussions that follow the introductory address on paper; and throughout the debate referred to this freedom was particularly noticed. These young men, which I suppose is a prerogative of youth, are very sure of themselves, and very impatient, if not revolutionary. They come to the conclusion that much of our so called Temperance Work, particularly the legislation "is only tinkering with a big problem. It is absurd, for example, to say that Public Houses should be shut on Sunday. They realised that the great desire to-day, more than ever before in the world's history, is that we should all strive after the godly, righteous and sober life. Therefore said they (and passed a resolution on it!), it is essential to stop legislating on this that and the other small detail, and get to the foundations, that is to say **Prohibit its manufacture altogether.** All we can say here is "Well said Belfast Mission Boys, may many of you live to see your resolution enacted."

A Contributor.

We wish to acknowledge this month, one pound subscription from Mrs. M'Kay (India) to the Committee funds.

P.G.

The Business Agent, the Rev. G J. Slipper, earnestly asks for the early payment of all outstanding accounts for the Magazine. Some of these are now considerably over-due, and it would greatly facilitate the balancing of the accounts if prompt payment were the practice.

The Need of the Church.

FROM A MINISTER'S POINT OF VIEW.

By Rev. A. Whitford.

We have met together to-night to take counsel with each other about the need of our Church ; to contribute from our individual experiences something that will help to stimulate its activities. At the outset, I believe it will be generally conceded that if we *need* a church at all we need *a living and a growing church.* The existence of *a movement for the deepening of the Spiritual life,* is a clear indication that all is not well with us ; that we are not "living," or "growing" as we should do. In facing this question, however, there are two views we must avoid : *the First is* that things will right themselves ; they will not, we have to work to put them right. *The Second is* that things are going from bad to worse. I don't believe it. As I consider this matter it seems to me that one of our outstanding needs is *the Optimistic Outlook.* We often hear that things are all wrong ; that we are achieving nothing—that we are no nearer the Kingdom of Heaven than when Jesus died on the Cross—that isn't true. The Church is a place where one should hear the note of hope and encouragement—not that we should ignore unpleasant tendencies, or minimise the truth—honest people do not want that kind of thing—they do not desire the truth to be taken, as they prefer to take their medicine—sugar coated. We need to face facts as they are, but not only the unpleasant, but the promising facts too. Above all things the church should reveal the Spirit of Him who declared so heroically : "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

I read a story recently of a furniture remover who went to visit a sick friend—he found him lying in bed in an attic—he sat down by the bedside, but said nothing and seemed lost in thought. "Well, Bill, you're a funny sort of comforter," remarked the sick man, "Why don't you say something ?" Sorry, Sam," said the visitor thoughtfully, "but I was just wondering how in the world they are going to get your coffin down them twisting stairs."

That story reminds me of the way some people talk about the Christian church, they seem to be concentrating on its decease instead of trying to foster its life. For my part I see no reason whatever for the pessimistic outlook. There may be some cause for anxiety, but not for pessimism in a church like ours. I have been preaching for over twenty years, during that time I have visited many churches and many denominations—and I want to say to-night, *that I know of no church equal in its organisation and breadth of Christian freedom, to the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland.* I know what this Church has meant to me—it has given that which another church denied me, namely Christian Fellowship and Freedom—and I should be failing in my duty if I neglected to spend my strength, and whatever talents I may have, in its service. A church like ours cannot go under—it stands for the very fundamentals of the Christian life—that is why I emphasise the need for *an optimistic outlook.*

And this leads me to my second point : We have in our Church machinery for progressive work—some of it may be getting a bit rusty for want of use, but it is there and I am going to suggest to-night that we make use of it. By "Progressive Work" I mean in the first place the raising of the normal life of our congregations—to help in the achievement of this task we should have visitations of Presbyteries. I do not suggest that these visitations should take the form of an inquisition—by no means—we should go to our brethren with a message of cheer and encouragement. There are many ministers and congregations who are doing heroic work in distant parts

of this province ; they toil on year after year and except for the Annual Statistics which are published we know very little about them ; nor they about us. I feel that a little practical interest on the part of the Presbytery to which they belong would make their tasks far more pleasant, and, therefore, much easier.

The New Testament speaks of the Church as a koinonia—a Fellowship—too frequently, the church is called ecclesia—an assembly. I like that Greek word koinonia because it stands for that which the Church really needs—and the world too, for that matter—namely, a common purpose—it needs *the human touch,* the brotherly grip. The majority of us know what a word of encouragement means ; we know how it helps us along especially when we are doing collar work. The people in these outposts cannot come to us—*can we not go to them ?* I have long felt that a service of this kind would meet one of the most pressing needs of our Church.

Then again I feel there is need for *the missionary spirit.* Jesus told his disciples to let their light shine, that men may see their good works. One writer has said that the Church has stopped ; that it is idle to look to it for any help in the regeneration of society. I am not particularly interested in criticism of that kind, in fact, people who talk like that always remind me of the one talent man—their only gift seems to be that of criticism—I wish they would follow the example of the man in the parable and go and bury it. I don't think the good Lord would love them any the less, and I am sure the church wouldn't be sorry. Not that I dislike healthy criticism—but I certainly cannot tolerate the criticisms of a man who is not familiar with what he is criticising. We want less criticism and more goodwill so that we can get on with the business.

I would not suggest a missionary spirit which sets out to interfere with other people's religious convictions—Unitarians recognise that convictions are sacred to those who hold them, and that they should be respected—but I do think we need to advertise, more than we do, the principles of our Faith.

The leader of our Church is Jesus of Nazareth, and the world can never do without his Gospel. Further, the Christian Church is the only Institution definitely representative of the life of Jesus—whatever it may be in practice, in theory, it stands for the Christian way of life, and the longer I live the more I become convinced that civilization can never do without the church. We read of one city without a church ; that is the ideal city—until we reach that, corporate church life is absolutely essential. Th Christian church is the depository of certain great truths which need to be affirmed--and further, *Jesus needs to be made central.* His way of life, it seems to me, is the only way whereby civilization may find healing.

I believe also that we need to realise that the object of the Church is to present God to the world—not to preach about Him only, but to reveal Him. History teaches that the men who have rendered the greatest service to mankind have been men who, above every thing else, were sure of God. Yes, it is actual contact with Him which produces the richest life, and here we touch the very core of Religion—a first hand experience with God. If, as a church, we can convince men and women of this truth we are doing the finest work a church can do. When Jesus said : Let your light shine, he called for integrity of life, just dealing, charity in action, and a cheerful spirit—these are the wondows through which men and women may see our church and understand our faith.

In conclusion, each member of our church needs to realise that *from him is demanded Personal Devotion.* I cannot emphasise this too much. It is really a strange condition of affairs

which faces us. From my experience I find that the greatest difficulty the church has to face is the indifference of its own members

One may divide the non-attenders into several classes : There are a few—not many, I am glad to say—who seem to think they are the Saints ; and the people who are carrying on the work of the church are the Sinners. There are others who seem to feel that the only obligation church membership imposes upon them is to see that the minister visits them regularly. They seem to think that the church is there to serve them not to be served by them. Their responsibilities are much the same as those felt by Robinson Crusoe when living on his desert island.

Others have their own ideas about what the church *ought* to stand for and usually one finds that this represents something less than the demands of our leader. They would support the church if it did as they would like it to do. I have read of one case of a great actor and playwright who lost a leg and in order to ensure that he would have a prominent place in his play, took care that a one legged man was wanted for an important part. So there are church members who would like to make the church fit in with their own limitations.

One of the problems which faces me as a minister is, how to convince these people that they have a duty to their church, and to rouse them to action. A year or two ago I made it my business to go round the people connected with my own church, and ask those who never came to their church to give me the reason why ? I had some interesting experiences ; I also picked up a great deal of church history. I often wish people of this kind would read Paul on " Membership," and take it in too. We talk about members of a church—what is a member ? A member of my body is a limb. If one of my limbs does not function properly my whole body suffers and becomes less efficient. This is equally true of Church membership. If the church is to function properly each one of its members is needed. Jesus declared—" I came to minister, not to be ministered unto." That is an obligation each one must feel. The chief interest must be not what can I get from my church ; but what can I *do* for my Church. We need co-operation in church life—service from all who belong to it—not half workers, and the other half slackers. That wasn't the way the church was founded—it was established by human sacrifice, toil of men and women who valued their faith and who considered no service too great for God and their Church. Those heroes and heroines of a past generation have handed on to us a sacred legacy—they had to pay a heavy price to purchase the freedom we have—they paid because they believed in those immortal truths for which the church stands. We have to hand on their legacy. Will it become more refined by being entrusted to our care ? That is a question the obligation of which all should feel.

To sum up, the church needs personal devotion from each of us. The Church needs the Missionary especially to make known the Truth for which it stands. It needs to use its own machinery and carry the human grip of Fellowship to those who are toiling in distant places—and it needs the optimistic spirit and outlook. There are other needs, too—these will doubtless be indicated in the discussion which is to follow.

The Dawning.

Dark is the night ; the Morning Star's bright beams
Herald a Daybreak, lovelier than all dreams.

Faint the horizon glows ; the Sun will rise
With healing in His wings, and bless our eyes.

The gates of Morning, bright with golden flame
Open ; the Lord of Light, returns to reign.

F. H. ALDHOUSE.

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The Women of Dante.

[A Paper read before the First Church Branch of the Women's League by Miss Hutton].

It has always seemed curious to me that, in the myriad studies to which Dante's many-sidedness has given rise, so little attention has been paid to his attitude towards women. Thus to most readers of the Divine Comedy two female figures only, Francesca da Rimini and Beatrice Portinari, seem to count, and yet, between the sad Francesca, whom we meet in the fifth chapter of the Inferno, and the radiant Beatrice of the Paradiso, there is a long series of interesting and remarkable women. But before embarking upon the Divine Comedy itself I must ask you to go further back, for we find the very germ of Dante's attitude towards women in the "Vita Nuova," the new life, that work of his youth in which he commemorates the impression made on his boyish heart by the sight of the eight year old Beatrice. That vision of purity and innocence, so deeply stamped on the "plastic wax of his soul," was never obliterated, and though sometimes obscured during the stormy course of his life, emerged in splendour towards the end of his journey. The Vita Nuova is an "inimitable little book, full of thoughts sweet, sad, pure, gentle and delicate; loving as the note of the dove, ethereal as the perfume of flowers. The pen, which in later years became as a sword in the hands of Dante, here traces the image of Beatrice and of his own love as tenderly as the pencil of Raphael himself." Of course there is a great deal of mysticism and idealism in the Vita Nuova, but of the reality underlying it there can be no doubt whatever. The narrative, briefly summarised, tells us, how when Beatrice was 18 years of age he met her again, walking in the streets of Florence

between two noble ladies ; how she graciously returned his salute ; how, later with the shyness of an enamoured youth he tried to dissemble his love by pretending to pay attention to another maiden, which, naturally, only made Beatrice turn away her eyes from him when next they met ; how he contrived to convey to her indirectly through a peom he wrote, that she had misjudged him ; how thereafter she looked on him graciously once more ; and how finally in her 25th year she was summoned from this world to the world above. He describes her death as not being due to chill or fever, which undoes so many, but to her own excess of goodness, which made earth no fitting place for her, and heaven her true home. Then the little book ends with these significant words : " After I had written this sonnet there appeared to me a wonderful vision, in which I saw things that made me determine to write no more of this blessed one until I should be able to write of her more worthily ; and, of a surety, she knows that I study to attain unto this end with all my powers. So, if it shall please Him by Whom all things live, to spare my life for some more years, I hope to say that of her which never yet hath been said of any lady."

But before we go on to see how Dante carried out this intention let us get a general idea of his conception of women's duties, and that we can gather from the words he puts into the mouth of his ancestor, Cacciaguida in Par. c. XV., who describes the simplicity of Florentine manners in former times.—

> " Florence, within her ancient boundaries,
> Was chaste and sober, and in peace abode.
> No golden braclets and no head-tires then,
> Transparent garments, rich embroideries,
> That caught the eye more than the wearer's self."

He goes on to say that the Florentine ladies of that day left their mirrors without any artificial colouring on their cheeks ; mothers themselves rocked their babies' cradles ; maidens and matrons spun the thread from the distaff, while listening to old tales of Troy and Rome. This may not seem a very poetic conception of women's duties, still we must remember that from Homer downwards, poets have sung of such things, and that the cares for the household and the hearth are very sacred in their eyes.

Mrs. Browning says somewhere that women can do much towards making a poet out of a man, and no poet ever enjoyed this advantage so conspicuously as Dante. In the very beginning of the Divine Comedy we learn from Virgil's lips that it was Beatrice, who, moved by Divine Grace, descended from Heaven to urge him, Virgil, to hasten to the assistance of her friend, who at the time had strayed so far from the right path that only the sight of Hell and Purgatory could save him from destruction. Dante's courage, which had faltered at the prospect of the terrible journey that lay before him, now revived and he declared himself ready to follow Virgil, " Thou Guide, thou Lord and Master." We do not find many women in the Inferno ; certain historical characters such as Semiramis, Cleopatra, and Helen of Troy are indeed castigated with severity, but when Dante meets Francesca da Rimini, buffeted for ever with Paolo by the infernal hurricane, his sternness melts, and after hearing her pathetic story, he is so overcome with pity that he falls insensible to the ground, " as a dead man might fall." This incident is so well known that I pass on to the realm of Ante-Purgatory where the first woman mentioned is Pia Tolomei, Canto V. This unfortunate lady incurred the wrath of her husband, who, wanting to get rid of her, sent her to live in one of his castles in the Maremma district, where the unhealthy mists from the marshes gave her fever from which she died. Here we learn that the prayers of those on earth have the power of shortening the time spent in Ante-Purgatory, and as all the spirits are

burning with the desire to commence the real expiation of their sins higher up the mountain, Pia and many others, entreat Dante to tell their kinsfolk of this, and to pray for them himself on his return to earth. Pia is wonderfully restrained as she speaks of her cruel husband, only saying, "Maremma unmade me : tis' known to him, who, first plighting troth, had wedded me with his gem." Neither in Ante-Purgatory nor in Purgatory proper can our pilgrims proceed during night time, and so Sordello leads them to a little valley in the side of the mountain, where they may spend the hours of darkness. Here, Dante held high converse with many friends, but having still somewhat of the old Adam in him was finally "vanquished by sleep," and dreamed a marvellous dream of the Eagle. On awaking in the morning he found himself in a strange place, and was told by Virgil that a fair lady, Lucia, had borne him in her arms to the gate of Purtagory, and that was where they then were. Dante roused himself and ascending on the three steps of sincerity, contrition and love, coloured respectively, white, deep purple and flaming red, he approached the Angel Guardian of the Gate, and flinging himself at his feet, he implored admission, which, after an explanation from Virgil, was graciously granted. With the tip of his sword the Angel traced seven P's on Dante's forehead, then drawing forth a gold and a silver key, he opened the pondrous gate, and after a short climb the poets arrived on the first of the seven Terraces. This lowest terrace is occupied by those expiating the Sin of Pride and among them we find no woman, but on the next terrace where the Sin of Envy is punished Dante addresses a female shade whose eyes are sewn up with wire, and learns that she is a Sienese lady named Sapia. She tells Dante, making a play on her name of Sapia, wisdom, that in her life on earth she was far more glad of others' hurt than of her own good fortune, and that here she is divesting herself of that evil fault of envy. Passing over many Biblical and Classical characters mentioned during the toilsome ascent of Purgatory we come in canto 23 to Dante's meeting with his friend Forese Donati, condemned for gluttony. Dante is much surprised at finding Forese already in Purgatory, as he could not have spent the needful time in Anti-Purgatory, and then Forese explains to him that it is to the holy prayers of his good wife Nella that he owes his early promotion to the sweet bitterness of torment. She is all the dearer to God in proportion to the loneliness of her virtue in that place of infamy, Florence, in which she lives. Forese prophesies what these same Florentine women are coming to when from the pulpit their immodest dress and bearing will be castigated. The last trial (Pur : xxvii.) which Dante has to pass through before reaching the Earthly Paradise on the summit of the mountain is a wall of glowing flames, and when summoned by an angel to press on boldly he was overcome by fear and remained rooted to the ground. In vain Virgil assured him that though here may be torment there is no danger to life, he cannot bring himself to face it ; but at last when Virgil, a little troubled at his pupil's cowardice, bethinks him to say. "Now look my son, twixt Beatrice and thee is this wall," Dante's stubbornness is melted, he enters the sea of fire, where the burning is such that he would have fain thrown himself into molten glass to escape from it. So we find at every critical stage of his journey it is the inspiration of this blessed one that nerves him to fresh efforts. But another night has to pass ere Dante, still accompanied by Virgil, enters Eden, and his awaking from this last sleep is rendered memorable by one of Virgil's finest speeches. The Master's mission is now over, and having trained Dante's mind to be free, upright and whole, he now crowns and mitres him lord over himself. They enter Eden through a lovely

forest but soon their further progress is barred by a stream. This is the river Lethe, and on the opposite bank they see a fair lady gathering flowers. This is Matilda, symbolically to be regarded as the type of the Active Life, and historically may be identified with the Great Countess of Tuscany, the supporter of Pope Gregory VII., the friend and bounteous benefactor of the Holy See and the Church. Matilda explains many things to Dante, and then the great Pageant approaches, every figure in which has its own mystical or symbolical significance, but all we are concerned with now is Beatrice, enthroned in the car drawn by the Grifon. "Olive crowned over a white veil, a lady appeared to me, clad, under a green mantle, with the hue of living flame." Before his eyes have discerned her, Dante's spirit has felt her approach; smitten with awe and terror at the remembrance of his grievous shortcomings he turns to Virgil for comfort, but Virgil, "Sweetest Father," had vanished, and not even the knowledge of where he was, i.e., the Earthly Paradise, could prevent Dante's cheeks being bedewed with tears. Then Beatrice, "queenlike in bearing, yet stern "poured forth on him such a tremendous indictment that even the very angels surrounding her were moved to compassion and remonstrance, their sweet harmonies seeming to say, "Lady, why dost thou so confound him." Dante feels his heart at first frozen by her reproaches, then melted by the pleading intercession of the angels; but Beatrice is still unbending, and turning to the angelic presences she rehearses the promise of Dante's youth, the gracious and fleeting beauty of his early vows, the pursuit of false good, to which he then surrendered himself, and his fall. So much remorse then gnawed at his heart that he fell senseless to the ground. When he came to himself he found he had entered the river Lethe, and Matilda was drawing him up the bank at the far side. He was there met by the hand-maids of Beatrice—Temperance, Prudence, Fortitude and Justice, who with the three Theological Virtues—Faith, Hope and Charity, led him up to her, still seated in the car. The waters of Lethe have washed away the stains of sin and they entreat her, "Turn Beatrice, turn thy holy eyes to thy faithful one, who to see thee hath moved so many steps." Four Cantos of the Purgatorio from the 29th to the 33rd—are occupied by Beatrice and all that she means to the poet; finally she directs Matilda to conduct him to Eunoe, the second river of the Earthly Paradise, a draught of which will restore the memory of any good deed done on Earth. The Cantica concludes with the words, "I came back from the most holy waves remade, even as new trees renewed with new foliage, pure and ready to mount to the Stars." Each of the three Canticas ends with the word "stars." Virgil and Dante issued from Hell to "see again the stars," and Paradise ends with the Beatific Vision in which he sees the "Love that moves the Sun and the other Stars."

The theme of the Paradiso is too vast to be touched on here, but I cannot refrain from calling your attention to Piccarda Donati, whom our Poet meets in the Heaven of the Moon. Dante had known her on Earth, she was the sister of his friend, Forese Donati, but at first he does not recognize her because, as she herself says, with heavenly humility, she is now so much fairer to look upon. As a girl she had dedicated herself to the order of St. Clare, and entered a convent, but from motives of worldly ambition her brother had torn her from the convent and forced her into a marriage. With her was the spirit of the great Constance, mother of Frederick II., whose vows were also broken against her will, and therefore both are inhabitants of the lowest of the ten Heavens. When Dante enquires do they not desire a more lofty place, she replies in one of the noblest and most

beautiful passages in the whole of the Divine Comedy. Par: c. III, 70.

All through the succeeding spheres of Paradise Beatrice is Dante's unfailing guide and help; now herself explaining the mysteries to him, now directing him to which blessed spirit to apply until in the 31st Canto she ascends to her own seat in the Divine Rose, and St. Bernard takes her place. This progressive continuity, which is the peculiar characteristic of the genius and love of Dante, and which lends such majesty to his great aim, that of leading those who are in a state of misery to a state of bliss, is found in his Minor Works as well as in the Divine Comedy, while in all, the life of struggle and suffering he led is revealed to us. In Beatrice he finds the link between the real and the ideal, between the symbol and the invisible, between earth and heaven, and in the face of the mighty love she kindled in the heart of the poet, death itself disappeared. His love for Beatrice did not dry up his other affections; it fostered and fertilized them all, strengthened his sense of duty, and enlarged his heart to embrace the whole earth. He says in the Vita Nuova, "Whensoever she appeared before me I had no enemy left; the flame of charity kindled within me caused me to forgive all who had ever offended me." This spirit did not of course persist after death had removed Beatrice from earth. Dante proved himself a good hater, but the power of further advance upon the path of purity and improvement instilled into him by her is a constant theme of his verses. I feel it is not too much to say that the worship of Woman pervades the great poem from beginning to end.

H. M. HUTTON.

Thoreau

Henry David Thoreau was born in Concord, Mass., U.S.A. He was above all a man most reserved in disposition —a peculiarity that belonged to him from his boyhood. He kept himself to himself, and refused to subordinate his individuality to that of others. Carlyle has somewhere remarked that life is a serious business, and that dictum might be put down as the reason for Thoreau's attitude. To him life was a thing to be lived "as tenderly and daintily as one would pluck a flower." When he had finished his university training he began work as a schoolmaster. This occupation, however, Thoreau could not continue. The necessity of flogging the children was a thing he could not contemplate, and since his committee considered that as the only right way of keeping school in order, Thoreau solemnly beat six pupils and then resigned, saying that school-keeping interfered with his arrangements.

What were his arrangements? He chose a piece of land in a wood on the brink of the clear deep green waters of Walden-pond, built a hut with his own hands, very unwillingly borrowing an axe for some part of the work, and settled down, as he puts it, "to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived." For just over two years he lived in this hut in the woods beside Walden-pond, and the book, "Walden," is the story of his life there, his thoughts and daily occupations.

We need not trouble ourselves here with the fact that Thoreau belonged to the New England Transcendentalist movement of which Emerson was the leader, though that fact throws a good deal of light upon the character of the man. That movement was just a rather cumbrous way of speaking about a very simple thing in that particular time and place. It represented the effort of a few people to shake off the bonds of a senseless materialism, and to get down to what appeared to them to be living realities.

Thoreau betook himself to the woods near Walden-pond to find himself and the truth of the world. It was an experiment; an attempt to learn what nature had to teach. We may not

believe that what the writer seeks to convey to us in his book, "Walden," is, as a scheme of life and thought, fundamentally practical, but that need not preclude us from feeling the value of a great deal he has to tell us. Every lover of nature will love Thoreau, for he has the eyes to see and the power to describe her every mood and manifestation. He tell us about himself, and how he lived there in the woods during two years, of the intercourse he had with nature, and how she ministered to his every need, how he found an intimacy with birds and forest creatures by seeking to understand them, and how wind and rain and sunshine alike brought tidings to his mind and soul.

Most of us would be inclined to think that such a life as Thoreau chose would be terribly lonely. Well, Thoreau believes that solitude is good for the soul, and in a measure that is perfectly true. Living with nature, however, he confesses that he never felt lonely. "Why should I feel lonely?" he asks, "Is not our planet in the Milky Way?" That is just stating in an extravagant manner a truth which we should all perhaps be better for practising oftener. Things tend to tyrannise the soul, and unless we get away from them we soon become their slave. I believe with Thoreau in the ministry of solitude. Get away from the routine of things now and again, seek an occasion where you can look into your life, lift the veil that hides so much from the world, and in silence commune with the highest.

Thoreau, of course, was an out and out individualist; a man prepared to venture all for the things of his own soul. In reading "Walden" we discover that what seem to be extremely commonplace things are, for Thoreau, the very constitution of life. To walk, to eat, to cut up logs, to read a little, to watch the bird on the bough, to cook one's dinner—"What has civilization to give," he asks, "how can luxury improve upon these facts?" "Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity!" is his cry, and in his evangel he was perfectly sincere. With him this business of finding the "simple life" was not a pleasing fad merely.

It was vital, and because it was so he was prepared to follow it to the utmost. He tells us how he found a fellowship with the living creatures of the woods. The birds would come and settle on his shoulders, the timid squirrel would come and nestle into his coat, he could put his hand into the water of the pond and the fish would come to him, the frightened creatures of the wood would eat out of his hand, and he could sit so still that the animals went on with their play undisturbed around him. We can bear to hear a man criticising our ways of living who has himself found such a rich store of goodness in the simpler ways of earth; we cannot but love this man who with all his declaiming was such a genuinely good man.

We cannot conclude without passing testimony to the fine idealism of this independent man who built his hut in the woods. He went out with a purpose and an ideal, and never failed nor flinched at the call. He says in "Walden," "I learned this, at least, by my experiment: that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavours to live the life he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours." "In proportion as he simplifies his life," he declares, "the laws of the universe will appear less complex, and solitude will not be solitude, nor poverty poverty, nor weakness weakness. If you have built castles in the air your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them."

That is the language of idealism, and I am thinking that no man can rightly carry on his work in the world without such idealism. Moreover, it is not only a means of individual salvation, but, in addition, it is the very pathway of national greatness. It is for

this reason, perhaps, that Thoreau in this book of his is such a splendid companion for the younger generation, for young people will respond when perhaps the eyes of their elders are holden.

Thoreau died when he was in the full tide of life, and had to endure long illness within doors. But from nature he had learnt both silence and stoicism, learned, too, to be content, not thoughtlessly or selfishly content, but with a healthy trust in the wisdom of life, and in nature, as he says, there is no sadness.

St. Patrick.

St. Patrick was a Protestant, wasn't he ? asked a Belfast City man. Well, he may have owned a certain allegiance to the Bishop of Rome as Patriarch of the West, just as there is a Patriarch of the East, who this year is calling together a Church Council to meet at Jerusalem ; but St. Patrick was not under Papal domination, yet he founded a tradition of his own, which Ireland followed for eight-hundred years, until Henry II. brought it under the Papacy. During that long period of time, the Church in Ireland passed from better days to worse, largely because of its loose organisation, based on that of Irish clans. However in the days of its strength and purity, it sent missionaries to England and Scotland, and when Augustine landed in England already there was a Christian Church in the land, and in Wales and Cumberland still remain traces of that older form, prior to the mission from Rome headed by Augustine. At Dean in Cumberland there is an old church which is a survival of that period.

We'll grant St. Patrick was a gentleman, who came of decent people, but that he built a church in Dublin town, and on it put a steeple, we're not prepared to say. More like, it was Armagh. Nor can we find confirmation of what is so often sung, " His mother kept a shebeen shop in the town of Enniskillen."

> " The Wicklow hills are very high,
> And so's the Hill of Howth, sir ;
> But there's a hill much bigger still,
> Much higher nor them both, sir.
> 'Twas on the top of this high hill
> St. Patrick preached his sarmint,
> That drove the frogs into the bogs
> And banished all the varmint."

There's no doubt about the hill, but which hill was it ? Some say it was in Antrim and some say it was in Tipperary—Slieve-na-Mann. The South claims him as theirs, and say he is buried there. The North claims him, and don't they show his grave at Downpatrick, if only the American visitors don't scrape it all away, to carry home a handful of the soil ?

The Patrick that drove out the snakes, and Patrick the old missionary may have been two who perhaps in some way became focussed into one. A younger man, who was concerned with breaking " the spells," repelling the evil curses that lay over the land, the heritage of a past when great wickedness had left its deadly influence. For if there be aught in blessing a church, or a font, or a stained-glass window, or a congregation, then it stands to reason there is also something in its opposite, in cursing. Science has demonstrated not only the action of sound, but also the thought in building forms. The office of exorcist in the Church still survives, and that is to repel all evil from places where the worshop of God is to take place. The life of the younger one may have been brief but needed, to spread abroad good influences, to make possible the work which was to follow; in any case he must have been a Great One.

Baharun whose name was changed to Barron, and from whom comes the name, older than any O's or Mac's, was a colleague of St. Patrick's, and though he is classed as a saint of the second-order, he is considered entitled to be ranked in the first, a bold seaman and daring adventurer, is thought to

have got to America and back again long before Columbus, and many a spot in Ireland, bears the name, for children brought to him for baptism were called after him.

Whatever the facts, (and who cares for facts?) the Spirit of St. Patrick breathes with power among us, and long may his blessing keep sacred the land of which St. Patrick is the patron.

ULLIN.

"Outlines of the History of Presbyterianism in Ireland."

BY DR. HENRY MONTGOMERY.

The Significance of Strabane.

The entire circumstances connected with the Synod at Strabane were burned into my memory, at the time ; and there they must remain indelible, until the frail tablet which contains the record shall be destroyed. Some of those circumstances, as illustrative of principles and characteristic of men and parties, appear to be worthy of preservation ; and I shall specially note down a few which could not have become known, even to the most accurate Newspaper reporter.

The popular excitement was very great, even from the commencement ; for, by some means, an expectation of great events had been awakened "in all the region round about." The Synod house, therefore, which was unusually filled upon the first day of meeting, came to be frequently crowded, almost to suffocation, as the debates proceeded ; and the audience unequivocally manifested by their looks, their gestures, and their tumultuous applause, that they deeply sympathised with the Calvinistic orators. It was evident too, that in this excitement, there was something more than mere sectarian enthusiasm ; for the High Church and Orange parties lent all their strength to swell the cry against religious liberty. In fact, the cause of Catholic emancipation was, at that time, making rapid progress ; and, as the Unitarians were well known to be, without exception, steady advocates of Catholic enfranchisement, the opportunity was dexterously seized to awaken political hostility thoughout all the regions of Calvinism, by identifying orangism with orthodoxy, and political liberalism with heresy. The design was completely successful, not in Strabane alone, but over the entire Province ; and Dr. Cooke speedily became quite an idol with the supporters of Protestant Ascendancy, by converting the stiffnecked Presbyterians of Ulster, from the Volunteer enthusiasm of the year 1782, and the less justifiable patriotism of 1798.

The excitement at Strabane produced another effect, which had, no doubt, been clearly foreseen. In the absence of subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith, and during the slumber of the church for the preceding sixty years, religious opinions had not been investigated, and the great mass of the people were entirely ignorant of doctrinal distinctions. In many cases, this arose from the neglect of the ministers and the indifference of their flocks ; but, to a considerable extent, it was attributable to the fact that many of the clergy, as educated men, had out-grown the nominal creed and catechism of their church ; and not wishing to alarm the prejudices or disturb the harmony of their congregations, they had gone quietly on, preaching neutral doctrines and good morality, without ever entering upon the thorny field of controversial theology. A few reading and thinking men in such congregations, with whom their ministers held friendly private intercourse, knew their opinions upon points of controversy and generally participated in their doctrinal sentiments ; but the great body of the laity, except in some fifteen or twenty congregations where the clergy had spoken **plainly,** still held a kind of traditionary orthodoxy, and were greatly pre-

judiced against "New-Light." In a very large number of congregations, therefore, there were two parties—a small Unitarian party, from conviction and a numerous Calvinistic party, from hereditary feeling and prejudice. I could name Presbyteries in which this condition of affairs existed, almost without a single exception; and, I believe, there was scarcely one Presbytery of the General Synod, in which it did not exist to a considerable extent—or, at least, to some extent. It is evident, therefore, that amongst a population thus circumstanced, nothing could be easier than to create a general excitement, by declaiming about "glorious old John Knox who rebuked a Popish Queen, and pulled down the nests of the Popish rooks, in Edinburgh"—about "our martyred ancestors that crimsoned the deep glens and mountain heather of Scotland with their precious blood, in defence of orthodoxy"—about certain monsters who, "though called ministers of the Gospel, deserved no more love, and were entitled to no milder appellation, than **robbers**—for they robbed the Saviour of His eternal crown of glory"—about "the awful destruction of priceless souls from the foul leprosy of Arianism"—and, finally, about "the blue banner of Ulster which would soon wave over the worthy descendants of the glorious Scottish martyrs, and marshal them on to victory over the enemies of the Truth." Under the exciting influence of such harangues, and amidst fearful denunications of all who should dare to exercise the right of individual judgment in the concerns of religion, the General Synod of Ulster resolved, like their worthy brethren of the older Inquisition, to demand from each member his assent **to,** or dissent **from,** a Declaration of Faith, couched in human phraseology, at which several of them had previously cavilled, and to which, I sincerely believe, not ten individuals attached precisely the same meaning.

(TO BE CONTINUED).

Reports.

Belfast : First Church.—The Annual Meeting of this Congregation was held in the Central Hall, on February 17th. A good attendance of members partook of tea, served by the ladies of the congregation. The chair was taken by the Minister (Rev. H. J. Rossington, M.A., B.D.), at eight o'clock. The meeting began with a Hymn and Prayer. Then Mr. J. H. Gilliland, who was acting since Mr. Eustace Gordon's vacation of the position of Secretary, and was later unanimously appointed Secretary, read the minutes of the last Annual Meeting, and the Annual Report of the General Committee. The Statement of Accounts, which reflected the careful labours of the Hon. Treasurer, Mr. William M'Robert, was printed and copies distributed to those present. It showed that during the year the bank over-draft incurred through extensive renovation of the church, manse, and Central Hall property, had been reduced by over £300. Good attendances at the services, assisted by the visits of the American Delegates, by courses of special sermons, and attractive musical renderings, were recorded in the report. The adoption of the Report and Statement of Aceounts was moved by the Chairman, seconded by Mr. Bowman Malcolm, M.I.C.E., and carried unanimously. The officers and the retiring members of the Committees were cordially thanked for their services, and new members of the various Committees were appointed. The formal business completed, the Organist and professional members of the Choir submitted a very delightful programme of vocal and instrumental music which was greatly appreciated by all present.

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Unity Guild.—On Saturday, December 16th a Whist Drive and Dance was held in the Central Hall. There was a very poor attendance, yet everyone present spent a very enjoyable evening

and those who are not sporting enough to support their own Guild missed a very good evening. On Saturday, January 20th, the Annual Entertainment was given at the Mission. There was a large attendance and a most enjoyable evening was spent. After tea had been served we had a very good programme consisting of a sketch by the Unity Players of Comber, called "Compromising Martha," the parts were taken by Miss Young as "Martha"; J. Young, Esq., as the "Curate"; Martha was played by Miss Stuart and Mrs. Box by Miss Allen. Our very best thanks are due to our Comber friends for their very fine sketch. The remainder of the programme was made up of songs and recitations all of which were very heartily encored. The singers were Miss A. Newman, Miss L. Russell, and Miss Dorothy Lyttle, and Mrs. Jackson and Miss Eileen Miller recited. Miss F. Newman, was, as usual, a very accomplished accompanist. The very best thanks of the Guild are due to all these friends who so willingly helped us. On Wednesday February 10th, the ordinary meeting of the Guild was held in the Mission; this took the form of a Concert, there was a good attendance. The York Street players performed the first two scenes from "The Auction in Killybuck" and fully upheld their previous record of success with this most amusing piece. Miss L. Newman then played a Nocturne by Chopin very effectively. Miss A. Newman contributed several songs which were very much appreciated and Miss Eileen Miller recited several times with her usual ability and danced "An Eastern Dance," with much grace. An unusual and very interesting feature of the evening was a talk on "Music" by Mr. W. M'Cafferty. He traced the developments of music from early times and gave us several hints by which we could more easily understand classical music. He illustrated his remarks at the piano. The rest of the items were accompanied by Miss

Non-subscribing Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

Bangor Congregation

SERVICE EACH SUNDAY EVENING

At 7 o'clock,

IN

Thompson's Tea Room, Main St., Bangor

(OPPOSITE POST OFFICE)

Minister: Rev. A. Whitford, Moneyrea.

Hon, Treasurer:
Mr. T. LILLIE,
6 Bingham St., Bangor.

Hon. Secretary:
Mr. GEO. J. HILL,
45 Ballyholme Esplanade.

Newman. Attention is called to the production of the Annual Dramatic performance on Tuesday and Wednesday, March 9th and 10th. The Operetta this year is entitled "Pearl The Fishermaiden," and promises to at least equal previous performances. The proceeds from the sale of the tickets will go to the Sustentation Fund, and the tickets, Reserved 2/-, and Unreserved 1/-, can be obtained from the Guild Local Treasurers. It is hoped that there will be a large attendance on both nights and that the Sustentation Fund will benefit considerably.

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Ballyclare.—The annual Social gathering in connection with above Church, was held in the Schoolroom, on Wednesday evening, 27th January. There was a gratifying attendance of members and particularly of young people. Proceedings commenced with an excellent tea dispensed by the ladies. After tea the minister presided and opened the business with a review of the Church's work during the past year, which showed that all our activities had been well maintained. Reference was made to the loss sustained by the death of Mr. John Grange, a staunch supporter of the Church and a Member of Committee. Over against the loss, however, was placed one gain. At the conclusion of the Minister's address a statement of accounts was submitted by the Treasurer, which showed a very satisfactory state of affairs. When most of the formal business had been disposed of, a musical programme was provided by members of the Choir and young people of the Sunday School. Among those who contributed were the following—Mrs. Moore, the Misses D. Forsythe, M. Kerr, A. Kerr, and Ella Kerr; Messrs. W. and J. Harson, J. Laird, and Masters T. and H. Peoples.

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Bangor.—Under the auspices of the Non-Subscribing Congregation in Bangor, Mr. Rossington delivered a lecture on his recent American tour. The lecturer had a most cordial reception from his Bangor friends, and all who attended went away feeling that they had been entertained to a vivid pen picture of some salient features of the great American continent. The members of the Non-Subscribing Church in Bangor earmarked the proceeds of the lecture to assist the funds of the Bangor Hospital, and it is understood that as a result of their efforts there will be a substantial sum available. The chair was occupied by the Rev. A. Whitford, who expressed the pleasure it gave him to be present, spoke of the object to which the proceeds of the lecture were to be given, and then introduced the lecturer in suitable terms. They felt highly privileged in having him with them in Bangor to tell them something of his American experiences, and they offered him the warmest of welcomes. Rev. Mr. Rossington then proceeded, with the assistance of a very fine collection of lantern slides, to take his audience on an itinerary of some of the places he had visited in America and Canada in the course of his tour there last year, when he was representative of the Unitarian Churches of England to the great centenary celebrations of the Unitarian churches. He described American life and manners with the insight of a keen and thoughtful observer, and his descriptions of some of the magnificient show places he visited were couched in picturesque and fluent language, so that it was quite easy to imagine oneself taking the tour in person. Mr. Rossington painted a delightful word picture of the Niagara Falls, and the views of the falls which he exhibited gave an excellent idea of the extent and power of the tremendous water course. His references to some of the towns he visited, both in the States and Canada, were most interesting, and in his concluding words he paid eloquent tribute to the hospitality and

kindliness of the American people with whom he had been in contact. A hearty vote of thanks was passed to the lecturer on the motion of Mr. M'Dowell, seconded by Mr. J. Millen, and the proceedings concluded. The lantern was operated in a most capable manner by Mr. G. Hill.

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Comber.—On Wednesday evening, December 23rd, the first of a series of lectures and counter-lectures was held in the old schoolroom. This was a new venture on the part of the Social and Literary Society and in the opinion of all was very successful. The subject for the evening's discussion was "The Mental Capacities of the Sexes," and there was a considerable number of people present. Mr. John Young opened the discussion and made a very strong case for the mental superiority of the male sex. Mrs. Davies then opened the case from the other point of view. The discussion was then opened to the meeting and some very good arguments were put forward. It was a great pleasure to hear so many of our members, both young and otherwise, getting up and saying their say with the rest instead of sitting and taking no part in the discussion—a thing which too often happens. After the matter had been thoroughly thrashed out, the discussion was brought to an end, and everyone left with a feeling of pleasure and a hope that that was the forerunner of very many enjoyable evenings. The third monthly social evening was held in the schoolroom on Wednesday, January 13th, and was very successful. Miss Eileen Miller very kindly came from Belfast and entertained us with some very skilful fancy dancing. We were also very much indebted to the Misses Quinn and Murray, who gave us recitations and songs respectively. Miss Gracey very kindly played the accompaniments. There was a programme of dancing interspersed amongst the other items, and for this the music was supplied by our friends Mr. Jack Gillespie and Master J. Donnan. The evening's programme was in the hands of Mrs. Davies, and a delightful tea was provided under the supervision of the Misses Ferguson, of Ballyrainey. The second of the series of debates was held on January 27th. There was a fair attendance of members. The subject for discussion was "Motor power versus Steam-power." Their respective merits were ably upheld by Miss Lily Ferguson and Mr. Harry M'Cormick. An interesting discussion followed. The fourth Social evening of the Session was held on Wednesday, February 10th. Mr. Jack Erwin took charge of the proceedings and there was an excellent muster of members and friends. Mrs. James Andrews rendered songs with splendid effect and was heartily encored. Miss Mabel Frame contributed several humorous recitations which were very cordially received by those present. An enjoyable tea was served under the supervision of Miss M. Osborne. The singing of the National Anthem brought the proceedings to a close. The Annual Sunday School Service and Prize Distribution was held on Friday, January 2nd. The scholars were entertained to a very enjoyable tea in the old school room. The company then adjourned to the large school room, where a large number of parents and friends were already gathered. An excellent Concert was then given by the scholars and teachers, the following contributing items. The Misses Bell Stewart, Lizzie M'Knight, Molly Ferguson, Lucy Neill, Flora Osborne, Betty Ferguson, Violet Adams, Gertie Frame, Gertie Geddis, Evelyn Canavan, Bella Mills, Mabel Frame, and by Messrs. A. Lamart, A. Huren, Noel Ferguson, Ivan Davies. Several choruses were rendered by the teachers and a Sketch was given by the Unity Players. About ninety prizes were distributed for good attendance. Mrs. John Andrews very graciously handed the gifts to the successful scholars. We are deeply grateful to Mrs. Andrews

for her kindness in coming to help us. It is gratifying to see the steady growth of the School year by year, and the teachers are to be heartily complimented on their good work. The Killinchy players came to Comber on February 5th and 12th, to give their play: "The Auction of Killybuck," and to help the Comber players to raise funds to pay for the new fixtures on the new platform. The entertainments were largely attended, people being turned from the doors on both nights, and the sum needed was more than realised. The acting of the Killinchy players was splendid in general and in some cases could not have been bettered. The Unity players gave "The Run-a-way Matches," and the first episode of "Compromising Martha." All the players gave of their best and are very promising. Messrs. Gillespie and Donnan kindly gave their services and played instrumental music between the acts. Mrs. and the Misses Ellison did the same for the Killinchy players and to them and all who helped in other ways to make the entertainment a success we are very grateful. At the concert on the 5th, which was organised by Miss Eva Andrews, songs were given by Mrs. Hugh Ferguson and Mr. Jack Grainger, so acceptably that they had to give encores. Mrs. Robert Ferguson was a splendid accompanist. Little Miss Belle Stewart gave the prologue of "Welcome" to the audience. Mr. H. Adams rendered great service in the matter of getting extra forms and acting as usher as also did Mr. W. Young and Messrs. Lamont. A playlet was also acted on the night of the 5th, called "The Burglar," Mrs. W. R. Miller and Mr. J. L. O. Andrews taking the parts of the wife and the burglar, who was the husband in disguise, most efficiently and effectively. The Women's League still progresses, the membership now being 63. The first meeting of the year was a service conducted by Mrs. Rossington. Tea was provided by Miss Munn, Cattogs House. Mrs. Cecil Andrews at the next meeting gave an address on "Life in Canada from a Working-Girl's View-point," and Miss Munn gave a demonstration of chrysanthemum making, which was much appreciated. A letter of greeting was received from the Rev. Wilna Constable who was instrumental in starting the branch. Several of the members have formed friendly links with members in America and England. One member who has left Comber for England became a Fellowship member and was met in London by a member of Rosslyn Hill, entertained and seen safely away to her destination where she was warmly welcomed by members living near her new home. Members are contributing to the Women's League Stall at the Bazaar in Manchester to help the poorer churches. Our last meeting was a joint meeting with Mountpottinger Branch and was a social evening. After a hymn and prayer, musical items were contributed by Mrs. E. R. Jackson, Mrs. Allen, the Misses Orr, whilst Miss Mitchell played the accompaniments. The Comber Unity Players gave a play and the Misses Petts and Wilson sang in costume "Grandmothers Old." The meeting was successful and fulfilled one aim of the Women's League to foster the social life of the church as a whole. The Comber branch visited Mountpottinger on the 15th March. Teas for the meetings have been kindly provided by the Committee, Mrs. David Munn, Miss Munn and Mrs. Thomas Andrews, for which the League gives its grateful thanks.

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Mountpottinger — The Sunday School New Year Party was held on Wednesday, January 20th, tea being served to the scholars. A programme of music, songs and recitations was subsequently given by members of the Band of Hope and the Leaders of the Band are to be congratulated on the performance which showed that a good deal of energy had been put into the work of training. The Book Prizes for attendances during 1925 were dis-

tributed by Mrs. Jas. Orr who although obviously a trifle nervous made a neat little speech. Encouraged by the success of the Musical Service held in December the organist arranged for another of the same type on the evening of February 6th when the following participated, supported by the Choir, who rendered a couple of Anthems. Soprano, Miss Ada Beattie ; Tenor, Mr. R. Adams ; Aeola, Mr. J. Porter ; Violoncello, Mr. R. Trevasani ; Organist, Mr. H. Shepherd. Unfortunately it proved necessary to omit the Violin Solo by Mr. R. Trevasani, owing to the leading string snapping when tuning up shortly before the Service commenced, but he has promised to come again in March when we sincerely hope there will be no illness or accident to come between the artiste and our appreciation of his renderings. Mrs. E. R. Jackson, in the absence of the President, Mrs. Watkins, occupied the chair at the monthly meeting of the Women's League, which was held on 8th February. The proceedings opened with a paper by Mr. Watkins, in which he gave an outline of Sir J. M. Barrie's play, " What Every Woman Knows." This item, although of somewhat unusual character, proved to be exceedingly interesting and provided a flood of enjoyment. Following an extract from the play itself, Mr. Watkins referred to other works by the same author, in terms of high appreciation. In thanking Mr. Watkins for his very interesting paper, the Chairman thought that in the endeavour of the League to take some of the church work off the Minister's shoulders, it had in reality been adding to it. Such a novel feature however, was of more than usual interest and she expressed the hope that similar contributions to the meeting would be forthcoming. Mr. Watkins replied that, although it was not common for one of his gender to address a Women's Meeting, it was a matter of the greatest pleasure to him to render any assistance that he could. Tea was then served, after which items of song and recitation were given by Miss Gertrude Campbell, Miss Freda Sewell (non-members), Miss Alva Orr and Mr. Watkins. With Mrs. Hay at the piano, this part of the proceedings was also thoroughly appreciated, and a very pleasant evening came to a close.

Obituary.

Mr. John Hutton, J.P.

With profound regret we announce the death of Mr. John Hutton, J.P., which took place on Monday night, January 25th, at his residence, Ligamaddy, Downpatrick. During his long and useful life he had figured prominently in the affairs and social life of Lecale, having served on many boards in connection with agriculture and social welfare, being always ready to do his duty for every good cause. He was a Justice of the Peace, and was well-known, not only in this country, but also in others as a breeder of thoroughbred horses. He was a gentleman of wide knowledge, considerate in judgment, just in thought and deed, everybody had great faith in him. He was a staunch Unitarian and a faithful member and generous supporter of our Church in Clough, and was deeply interested in all that our body in general did. The funeral on the following Thursday, to Kilmore Churchyard, was exceptionally large, representing all the classes, opinions and interests of this part of the country. By his death not only has our Church but also the neighbourhood generally sustained a serious loss, and we extend our heartfelt sympathy to the sisters and brother in their sorrow.

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